

REPORT OF THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE MARCH 28, 2015, OBUKHOV MURDER-SUICIDE IN BEDFORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

I. THE INITIAL REPORT

On Saturday, March 28, 2015, at about 11:09 a.m., a male 911 caller, later identified as Alexi Obukhov, reported that his wife had shot herself and their children. During the 911 call, Alexi yelled and made wailing and howling noises in an extremely distressed manner. He repeatedly recited the address "17 McAfee Farm Road." He yelled, "She killed my kids!" "She shoot [sic] my kids! Killed them!" He then stated "They all dead," and shortly thereafter put the phone down. He could be heard continuing to wail and howl in the background during the call.

Bedford police officers and New Hampshire State troopers immediately responded to the Obukhov residence in Bedford. Bedford police officers made contact with Alexi and detained him outside the residence. He was agitated, but fully cooperative.

Alexi is a local gun store owner in Merrimack. His wife and children lived in a single family home at 17 McAfee Farm Road in Bedford. Alexi, however, had recently moved out and was living in Merrimack. He was at the Bedford residence that morning to oversee repairs to the septic system.

II. THE INVESTIGATION

A. Search of the Obukhov residence

After being called to 17 McAfee Farm Road, investigators searched the residence. The residence was a three story, three bedroom home with an attached two car garage. The master bedroom and the two children's bedrooms were located on the second floor. In the first child's bedroom at the top of the stairs, investigators found Elizabeth Obukhov (age 6) and Nina Obukhov (age 34) dead from gunshot wounds to the head. Elizabeth was under a blanket in bed and Nina was slumped over the same bed.

In the second child's bedroom across the hall, investigators found Katherine Obukhov (age 8) also under a blanket in bed, dead from a gunshot wound to the head.

Investigators also found a hand written note on a green stuffed chair in the first child's bedroom that was written in Russian and translated as follows:

How did you not expect a different outcome? It was amusing to me to watch all your rat race!

Noted at the bottom of the page was the date, March 28, and the time of 2:00, but no indication of a.m. or p.m. The hand writing in the note was consistent with a sample of Nina's handwriting found on file with the children's school, the Riddle Brook School in Bedford.

A SCCY 9 mm handgun was found underneath Nina's body in her right hand. Investigators examined the position of the body and pattern of blood staining. Nina's body appeared undisturbed and in a natural position. Investigators believe that the gun in Nina's hand did not appear staged. Its position was consistent with having been fired by Nina and then folding into her collapsing body after the self-inflicted wound.

Three 9 mm discharged cartridge casings were found in the first child's bedroom, and two casings were found in the second child's bedroom. Ballistic testing at the New Hampshire State Police Forensic Laboratory confirmed that the bullets that killed Nina and her two children were discharged from the barrel of the 9 mm handgun that had been found in Nina's hand. A trace of the serial number on the handgun revealed that Nina had bought the gun on February 18, 2015, from Al's Gun and Reel Shop Inc. in Derry, New Hampshire.

In the master bathroom, investigators found a box of 9 mm Luger ammunition on the vanity counter with five bullets missing. Underneath the ammunition was an instruction manual for the SCCY 9 mm hand gun.

Investigators also found a disconnect notice for non-payment of an Eversource electric bill in the kitchen.

B. Timeline

Investigators interviewed close to fifty witnesses. After contacting the Riddle Brook School in Bedford, investigators learned that both children had attended school on Friday, March 27, 2015.

When investigators canvassed the immediate area of McAfee Farm Road, they learned that only one neighbor had heard anything out of the ordinary. Christy Robertson of Middleton Road heard what she believed was a single gunshot at about 12:00 a.m., early Saturday morning. At the time, she was outside letting her dog in.

Investigators learned that Nina had very limited contact with family or friends. She last spoke to her sister in Russia four days before the incident. When interviewed, Nina's sister told police that Nina seemed depressed and was unhappy in her marriage.

The investigation revealed that that Alexi and Nina had been struggling in their marriage, and that Alexi had moved out about ten days before the incident. He had purchased another home located in Merrimack.

On Saturday, March 28th, at about 10:30 a.m., Alexi arrived at the McAfee Farm Road residence in Bedford with three men from Thomas Howe Septic Systems to assess a problem with the septic tank. Keith, Kevin and Thomas Howe of Thomas Howe Septic Systems were interviewed separately. According to the three men, the week before they

had completed work at Alexi's new Merrimack residence. Alexi then asked the Howes to take a look at the system at McAfee Farm Road.

The Howes were scheduled to look at the system on Monday, March 30, 2015, but Thomas Howe called Alexi on Saturday morning to move up the appointment. At about 10:30 a.m., the Howes met Alexi at the residence. Alexi arrived at the residence in his own tan colored truck at the same time as the Howes.

Once at the residence, the Howes immediately started working outside digging up the septic tank. While the Howes worked outside, Alexi went inside the residence through the garage. He was inside for about two minutes and came back out through the front door.

When Alexi emerged from the residence he had his keys in one hand and phone in the other. According to the Howes, he appeared out of breath and red in the face; something appeared "to be very wrong." They heard Alexi yelling, "Guys! Guys!" and began crying and making an "ungodly" type of sound, howling and wailing "like [a] wounded animal." The police arrived a short time later.

Investigators believe the children and Nina died sometime in the evening Friday or early Saturday morning before Alexi and the Howes arrived.

C. Autopsy results

The State's Chief Medical Examiner, Dr. Thomas A. Andrew, performed autopsies on Nina and her two daughters on March 28 and March 29, 2015.

Elizabeth Obukhov (age 6) and Katherine Obukhov (age 8) both died as a result of single gunshot wounds to the head. Their manner of death was homicide.

Nina Obukhov also died as a result of a gunshot wound to the head. Her manner of death was suicide.

There were no significant toxicological findings in either the children or Nina's blood.

D. Alexi Obukhov's statement to police

Alexi told the Bedford Police that upon arriving at 17 McAfee Road on Saturday morning he opened the garage door and was surprised to discover his wife's car still there because she and their two daughters were supposed to be at Russian school. He went into the house and noted that it was very quiet, which was odd because it was too late for his daughters to still be sleeping. He went upstairs and found one of his daughters dead in one room and his wife and other daughter dead in another room.

Alexi gave consent to investigators allowing them to collect whatever they needed from his person, including clothing, personal items, fingerprints, a DNA sample, as well as allowing them to test for gunshot residue. He also asked to speak with an attorney. Alexi was later contacted through counsel and respectfully declined to be further interviewed by police.

E. Investigation into Alexi Obukhov

Alexi owns the gun store “619DW Guns and Ammo” in Merrimack. Investigators interviewed his employees Dennis Magnan and Keith Cox. According to Magnan and Cox, Alexi closed the store with them on Friday night at about 7:30 p.m. and seemed to be acting normal. Nothing seemed to be wrong.

Investigators interviewed Alexi’s new neighbors in Merrimack, the O’Donnells. Daniel O’Donnell said that he had not seen Alexi in person, but that Alexi’s tan colored truck was parked in the driveway Friday night at about 11:00 p.m. when O’Donnell went to bed. The truck was still there in the morning at about 9:00 a.m. when O’Donnell and his wife went to breakfast.

Investigators examined Alexi’s cell phone records. The call detail records showed that his phone was active in the area of Merrimack on Friday, March 27, 2015, between 11:14 a.m. and 2:57 p.m., and then again was active in the area of Merrimack on Saturday, March 28, 2015, from 10:04 a.m. until 10:42 a.m. There were no call records available from 2:57 p.m. until 10:04 a.m. This gap in call logs may have been because the phone was either turned off or because the connection had switched to a wireless connection. Phone calls made on wireless connections do not connect through cell towers and therefore do not create a call log.

The records further showed that Alexi’s phone was in the area of Merrimack at 10:04 a.m. when he received a call from Thomas Howe of Thomas Howe Septic Systems. This is consistent with Mr. Howe contacting Alexi to move up the appointment to look at the septic system. Then at 11:00 a.m., around the time the Howes met Alexi at the Bedford residence, Alexi’s phone received another call from Thomas Howe, this time being active in the Bedford area. The next call logged was Alexi’s call to 911 at 11:08 a.m., followed by a flurry of phone calls to his daughter from his previous marriage and then his attorney.

F. Prior domestic violence allegations

Investigators learned that the relationship between Nina and Alexi was tumultuous and there were concerns of possible domestic violence. These concerns were expressed to investigators by Nina's family, friends, neighbors and the children's school.

Nina had no family in the United States, but investigators interviewed Nina's sister, Elena, from Russia. Elena told investigators that according to Nina, Alexi drank and was very aggressive. She said that Nina and Alexi's relationship was not good and that she had advised Nina to get a divorce. She said Nina was afraid to get a divorce because based on what had happened to Alexi's former wife, he would leave Nina with no money. Elena described Nina as very passive and submissive. She told investigators that on or about September 2013, Nina told her that Alexi had assaulted her, but Elena did not provide any details as to what happened.

Investigators interviewed David and Olga Thirkill of Bedford. Nina and the Thirkill's daughters were in dance class together. The Thirkills told investigators that and that on or about August 2013, Nina had sought advice because David was a mediator. Nina told the Thirkills that her husband had hit her, and she was thinking about leaving him. Nina told the Thirkills that Alexi had told her if she testified against him and he went to jail that he would have food and a place to stay, but that Nina and the girls would not. The Thirkills believed that Nina stayed with Alexi for the girl's sake because of the financial threat.

Investigators interviewed a Bedford neighbor, who recalled seeing Nina with a bruised eye around that same time period.

Investigators learned from one of Elizabeth Obukhov's former teachers from Creative Kids Preschool in Bedford that around that same time period, Nina had a black eye and had confided that her husband had hit her.

Investigators learned from one of Katherine Obukhov's teachers at the Riddle Brook School that at times, Katherine seemed angry at her family and was not happy at home. She was frequently late for school, which resulted in a meeting with Nina. During the meeting Nina explained that the children were up all night because of arguments in the home between her and her husband. School officials told investigators that they tried to offer Nina assistance, but that she was reluctant to accept.

Investigators also learned that Bedford police responded to a domestic call at the Obukhov residence in November of 2013. Nina had called police and reported that her husband was intoxicated and harassing her. No charges were filed.

G. Nina's mental state preceding the incident

Nina's sister Elena told investigators that Nina had been depressed lately and had received treatment for depression in the past. Elena was particularly worried about Nina because about two weeks before the incident, Nina sent a package home to Russia that contained clothing, personal items and all of Nina's important documents, such as her Russian and United States passports and her citizenship paperwork.¹ Elena spoke to Nina on the phone a few days before the incident, and Nina seemed depressed. Elena and her family were concerned and attempted to call Nina again, but were unable to reach her.

H. Cancelled Appointments

Investigators learned that on Friday, March 27th, Nina cancelled two upcoming appointments. As to the first, she cancelled an appointment with Bedford Commons Periodontics for the following week. She did not explain to the receptionist why she was cancelling or attempt to reschedule the appointment. As to the second, she cancelled an appointment with Alchemy Spa that was about a month away.

III. CONCLUSION

The physical evidence and Nina Obukhov's behavior in the days and weeks before the incident are consistent with Nina killing her children and then killing herself. There is no indication that Nina's husband or a stranger entered the home and killed Nina or her children. To the contrary, the overwhelming weight of the evidence points to a murder-suicide perpetrated by Nina.

As to what precipitated this murder-suicide, a major contributing factor was likely Nina's mental health issues and marital situation. Nina's sister reported that Nina was depressed and had a history of depression. This condition may have been aggravated by relationship issues between Nina and her husband that led Nina to feel isolated and trapped. Nina repeatedly told people that she feared losing everything if she divorced Alexi. Alexi had recently moved out and investigators found an electric bill shut off notice in Nina's home. These circumstances together may have been the impetus that led to this tragic event.

Since the perpetrator here, Nina Obukhov, took her life and is dead, no criminal charges will be brought in connection with this matter and the case will be closed.

[1338041]

¹ On December 16, 2015, Nina's family emailed investigators photographs of the package label and its contents. Nina's sister told investigators that she recognized Nina's handwriting on the label. Nina's signature on the label was dated March 2, 2015, and the United States Postal Service postmark was dated March 21, 2015. The hand writing was consistent with the note left in Elizabeth's bedroom.